

The **BLUE JAY**



BULLETIN
of the
SASKATCHEWAN NATURAL HISTORY
SOCIETY

In Co-operation with
The Saskatchewan Provincial Museum

The Blue Jay

Official publication of the

SASKATCHEWAN NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Editor: Lloyd T. Carmichael

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Three Years: Arthur Ward, Burnham; A. McPherson, Saskatoon; Mrs. Marion
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REGINA DIRECTORS AND EXECUTIVE FOR 1950

F.S. Robinson; F.G. Bard; Dick Bird; W.A. Brownlee; W.F. Whitehead
G.F. Ledingham.....Business Manager

The aim of the society is to continue and extend the work and ideas of the Founder of the BLUE JAY, the late Mrs. Isabel M. Priestly, in forming a medium of exchange of nature observations of mutual interest, and in working together for the protection and conservation of the wild life in Saskatchewan.

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

The BLUE JAY is published quarterly at a yearly subscription rate of one dollar. Anyone interested in any phase of nature will be a welcome member to this organization. All subscriptions will start and terminate on the first day of January.

All material for the BLUE JAY, as well as all subscriptions and business letters, should be sent to the Editor at 1077 Garnet Street, Regina.

Material for each of the four issues should be submitted not later than Feb. 15, May 15, Aug. 15, or Nov. 15, as the case may be.

The success or failure of the BLUE JAY depends to a great extent on the type of material submitted by the members of our Society. Each subscriber is a potential contributor, and so a share of the responsibility rests on the shoulders of all.

We have received many letters praising our bulletin, complimenting the contributors on the excellent manner in which they have presented their nature observations, lauding the Society for the splendid contribution which it is making by creating a greater interest in the wildlife of Saskatchewan and in its conservation.

But we have reason to believe that there are many who have withheld their opinions; who believe that the BLUE JAY, as a nature magazine, is not up to standard; who are convinced that more should be done to create and hold the general interest.

Of course we should be never satisfied with past accomplishments. All of us must feel that there is a great deal of room for improvement. "We have done those things which we ought not to have done and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done." Suggestions for change - for improvement will be "thankfully received and faithfully applied."

With the sincere hope that we will not offend or discourage any member who so unstintingly has given his time to record his observations, we would like to offer the following suggestions:

It is better not to submit material for publication in the form of a letter. These letters are most interesting, but they very often contain a variety of stories, all of which must be sorted out before they can be printed. Readers will have noticed that an attempt has been made to arrange the BLUE JAY articles under different sections - birds, mammals, insects, flowers, archiology, etc. Please classify the observations so that they may be easily transferred to the proper section. It would be preferable to write each on a separate sheet of paper, suitably headed.

Let us suppose that the members of the Society have met for a week's outing at a suitable lake and camping ground, and that on the last night before their departure they are gathered around a campfire, telling stories of their experiences and observations. One enthusiast is trying to hold the attention. "On Monday," he says, "I saw three robins, two crows, five meadowlarks sitting in a row on the fence, one woodpecker on the trunk of a tree, a field mouse and a big black bear. On Tuesday a flock of geese flew overhead. I saw a monarch butterfly, two porcupines, a white-tailed deer jumping over a fence and three kinds of ducks although I was unable to distinguish the species. Wednesday was, for me, the big day. From 1030 in the morning up to 12.15 I saw three tree swallows, five juncos, four pelicans wading near the shore of the lake, a lizard, a beautiful ostrich fern and at least a dozen flowers which looked like a pink species of pyrola. On Thursday" By this time the attention of the audience is directed towards the antics of an inquisitive grey squirrel, who brazenly enters the circle and accepts tid-bits from a dozen outstretched hands --- the rest of the story falls on deaf ears.

The point is, talk and write about some definite incident that will hold the interest of the audience or the reader -- a story about the

cunning coyote, the antics of the ants, the ^{ow} catbird's egg in the warbler's nest, the determined parent hawk as it protected its young, the gulls and the grasshoppers, unusual bird visitants. There are hundreds of subjects; it only remains for him to tell that story.

If they so desired, five hundred members of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society could each tell of incidents that would be of interest to all. We want no one to hold back because of timidity or of fear of improper phrase construction or unsuitable English. Such things, to us, are not always important and will easily be rectified. The main thing is to give the facts and tell the story in your own way. Do not submit your valuable daily diary of facts, but from among them select those nature gems and conservation ideas, which may remain with you and the rest of us for years to come.

Let us give this just one try and there seems no doubt that the next issue of the BLUE JAY will stand up to the ideals and expectations of even the most pessimistic.

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HOW ARE OUR FINANCES?

There are two factors which, in the publication of the BLUE JAY, make for success. The first has been discussed above, but there is another without which our best efforts will be in vain -- that is money.

Starting with a bank balance of about \$58 on November 1st last, we will, after this issue is paid for, wind up with an expected balance of between seventy-five and eighty dollars, with one more issue to go in 1950. This condition prevails in spite of the fact that we have received generous special donations from the Regina and Yorkton Natural History Societies and from nine of our members, amounting in all to \$130.

The cost for publication of our last three issues was \$350.59, an average of almost \$120 each. It is very plain to see that we are not paying our way and it is our opinion that special grants and patron donations do not make for sound business principles.

What is wrong?

In the first place we seem to be financing on a shoe-string. The potential revenue from 500 members, 20 of whom receive complimentary copies, is \$480. The cost of four issues is \$470 -- balance \$10, provided every member pays his membership and subscription dues.

But the point is, all members do not pay their subscriptions. They forget. At the present moment there are 125 members who have not paid their 1949 dues. We are convinced that in nearly all cases this is simply a case of oversight, but nevertheless it is an oversight that may mean the success or failure of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, as far as the publication of a quarterly bulletin is concerned.

When you receive this issue, please look on the outside of the

envelope, and if it is indicated there that you are paid up to Dec. 31, 1949, it would be appreciated if you would rectify that as soon as possible.

We invite discussion on this subject and will welcome any suggestions that may be made for improvement.

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THE ANNUAL MEETING

The following is a special notice to all members of the Society from our President, Dr. George Ledingham:

The Annual Meeting of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society will be held in the Provincial Museum of Natural History on Friday, October 27.

A full program of films, discussions and tours will be provided. Complete programs may be obtained from the Editor or the Business Manager.

Plan to attend these meetings. See the progress being made at the museum. Take your part in determining the future plans of our Society.

All paid-up members of the Society may vote at the annual election of officers on October 27. If you cannot attend the meeting in person, you can write in your suggestions and nominations. Each of these will be accepted as a vote.

Positions open for election are president, two vice-presidents and five directors to represent the province as a whole. The presidency should not be held by a Regina man each year, but should probably rotate between the established Natural History Societies. The directorships open for election are those which at present are shown as serving for one year. Present officers may be re-elected. The five directors will be elected for a three-year period. They should be active in support of the Society. If new names are suggested by letter, comments should be included to aid the voting of those attending the annual meeting.

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BRITISH EMPIRE NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION

The Saskatchewan Natural History Society, through the foresight and generosity of Mr. Arch C. Budd, of Swift Current, is now a member of the B.E.N.A.

This is an organization of amateur field naturalists throughout the British Commonwealth of Nations, which was founded in England by E. Kay Robinson in 1905. Its official organ, a copy of which has been sent to us, is called "Country Side."

We have received the following letter from Mr. G. A. Hebditch, Hon. Secy. of the Association:

"It is with pleasure that following a letter and remittance for 15 shillings, received from Mr. A. C. Budd, Swift Current, I have entered the name of your Society in our Records. I am glad to enclose the current number of our Journal, "Country Side" and we shall be very glad to see your "BLUE JAY" as opportunity arises. I am able to record the addition of several new Dominion names to our Membership and have had the satisfaction of being able to help some visitors to this country.

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PRESIDENT OF DUCKS UNLIMITED

Congratulations are extended to one of our Directors, Judge L. T. McKim, of Melfort, who was elected president of Ducks Unlimited at the annual meeting which was held at Calgary, June 3. He succeeds Dr. W. F. Tisdale, of Winnipeg, who was named chairman of the Board of Directors.

The enthusiasm which Judge McKim has displayed for many years in connection with bird life, conservation of wildlife and sport, singles him out as an ideal man to direct this important organization.

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APPRECIATION

John D. Ritchie,
Wallwort.

When I was quite a small lad, before I even started to school, there worked on my father's farm, five miles north of Beaverton, Ontario, at Point Mara on beautiful Lake Simcoe, a most remarkable man. At that time he seemed to me to know all about the trees, the flowers, the birds and bees, the big and little animals. The very stones in the soil became interesting with the stories he told me about them. All these natural objects he knew something about.

Now if anyone had called him a naturalist he would have scoffed at the idea. He married after working three years for my father. He and his beautiful wife bought a farm close by and had three daughters. When I was a young man he died with cancer and his wife shortly after, both in their early forties. His children I have lost track of completely but they all became talented and educated women of whom any parents could have been proud.

Many were the nature questions he answered for me and mysterious problems that I couldn't figure out for myself, he seemed to know. He showed me my first hummingbird's nest on the branch of an apple tree; a nighthawk's nest; a big moth hatched from a cocoon - a wonderful Luna with long tails; a delicate little orchid growing by the creek and pyrolas on the banks; his wife's wonderful wild flower garden; the tiny sundews growing on mounds in the swamp with flies sticking to their rounded viscid leaves on which, he said, the plants obtained their supplementary nourishment; and many, many other highly interesting things.

Some people said he was a fool to spend so much money on books. I wonder? I have never forgotten how he satisfied my thirst for nature knowledge. He let me drink at its well. A Great Naturalist with little education, but with an immense store of knowledge of the great out-doors.

I will always remember him.

His name was Duncan Carmichael.

That is how I can remember the name of the present editor of that marvellous little quarterly publication put out by the Saskatchewan Natural History Society -- the "Blue Jay."

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PUBLICATION DATES

W. Yanchinski

It has occurred to me that each issue of the BLUE JAY would represent a definite seasonal phenomena in nature if the dateline for the submission of material were set ahead a couple of weeks, say, June 1, September 1, etc. For example, it is quite impossible to present a complete picture of the nesting activities of birds by May 15, since many of them, especially if it should happen to be a late spring, have barely arrived in their summer home by then. Similarly, Feb. 15 is hardly the end of the winter. March 1 would be an improvement.

NOTE:

Mr. Yanchinski is quite correct. The incompleteness of natural seasons at the time of the present date-line has resulted in confusion and incomplete migration observations. We are pleased that he has brought this matter to our attention. It will be discussed with the executive shortly and no doubt the desired change will be brought about....ED.

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FROM APRIL TO JUNE

E. Cruickshank, Regina.

April the eight; snow was swirling and drifting around the yard. The birds' bread-crumbs were being blown and buried in it. I placed larger tid-bits in sheltered spots. Sparrows descended hungrily when suddenly---

"They came with noise and clamour
Rush of wings and cry of voices" --

stubby-tailed black birds with sharp yellow bills, reddish legs set far back on bodies which were strangely speckled -- starlings, of course. The sparrows were not allowed to eat that day.

The starlings came and went with the storm. We had seen none before, nor have seen any since.

More juncos visited us this year than in any former year - and stayed longer. Among the slate-coloured and the paler grey ones were some that were definitely pink-sided. They evidently liked bathing. It is a sight never to be forgotten to see one after another dive into dry snow, flutter its wings and come out refreshed.

The trilling little song of the juncos assures us that spring is coming: the first infant crocuses are proof that it is here. We found them in a sheltered warm depression in the Valley on April 5.

Mrs. Jacques in "Canadian Spring" was surprised and pleased to find a bee, not busy, but sleeping in a crocus blossom. We found several

in the same apparent blissful state. One brought indoors was found several days later not to have wakened. Why? Mr. A. C. Budd has suggested they partook of the poison present in the crocus cup.

Summer may have been delayed in reaching here, but has it not brought a "world full of abandon of colour?" For every walk, beauty has been at our side.

One early evening, late in June, I felt nothing could be more beautiful than the prairie this night. Blue heavens above -- groundsel, asters, mustard and cinquefoil placing gifts of gold at our feet -- late pentstemon and flax bring the blue of the sky within reach. Every garden needs a touch of white -- here were daisies and yarrow to supply the contrast. Sergeant always had a bit of red to make his paintings complete -- before us nodded the loveliest three-flowered avens I had ever seen -- rose-madder in the shade, but red enough to supply the needed warmth -- a perfect picture.

What indeed is so rare as a day in June!

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SIGNS OF FALL

E. Barker, Regina.

Once again signs of fall are everywhere -- crickets are singing; hoppers are hopping; berries colouring; grass patches generously donating their quota of spears for your clothing as you walk by; gophers storing; seeds falling or floating everywhere and last, but not least, birds assembling.

During a walk on August 13, in the vicinity of the Legislative Buildings I saw the following birds in half an hour:

Eared Grebe, Ring-billed Gulls, Spotted and Least Sandpipers, Brewer Blackbirds, Kingbirds, Cedar Waxwings, Catbird, Goldfinches, Yellow Warbler, Pine Siskin and Barn Swallows.

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BLUEBIRDS COMMON AT GREENFELL

Mrs. John Hubbard, Jr., informs us that Bluebirds were quite common around her district this spring and nested on many farms. A pair about their home won the battle with the sparrows and nested for a considerable time but no young were seen. A box inside a knot-hole in a bin put up for Bluebirds was used by Tree Swallows.

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HUMMING BIRDS AT TOLLAND. ALBERTA Mrs. O.L. Walters

Quite a few around have seen humming birds in their gardens lately. I saw one August 2 among my delphiniums and scarlet lychnis. The next day a neighbor said she had seen one among her flowers the day before also, and while talking about it two more made their appearance in the garden. Still another neighbor saw one a few days ago and about the same time my young son watched one among the scarlet runners of his garden.

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SPARROWS IN THE BACK YARD

E Barker, Regina.

During the period from May 16 to 27, when each day I fed up to 30 Clay-coloured Sparrows along with other species, the House Sparrow played quite an important rôle. Every new bird which arrived was either led or followed to my yard by one of these birds. He always proved quite a helper in grinding down the hard pieces of bread for the Clay-coloured Sparrows who were unable to do this type of work. The wee sparrows would first draw back in alarm as their helpers would barge onto the table and snatch the largest pieces of bread. However their fear was soon overcome when they saw fine crumbs scattered around as a result of the larger sparrow's efforts to dispose of the morsels.

On May 16, the following kinds of sparrows fed on crumbs in my yard in one square yard of space: 2 House Sparrows, 8 or 10 White-crowned, 1 White-throat, 1 Lincoln, 1 Savanna, 8 Clay-coloured, and 2 Vesper. For a few minutes all except the Vespers were feeding together.

Of great interest in my district this summer are a pair of Purple Martins, which frequently appear on a hunting spree around my yard. Lark Buntings started singing near the house this year on June 5, and continued each day until July 27. Since that time a depressing silence seems to brood over the place - their rollicking, tinkling, soaring song is greatly missed.

A GOOD YEAR

W. Yanchinski

The birds, like the red lilies, roses and berries, appear to have had a good year. Among the species observed nesting for the first time in recent years were the Brown Thrasher, Horned Grebe, and Hermit Thrush. Among others who have successfully raised families are Ruffed Grouse, Hungarian Partridge, Mountain Bluebird, Barn Swallows, Sparrows (Song, Vesper, White-throated, Clay-coloured), Least Flycatcher, Baltimore Oriole and large numbers of Red-tailed Hawks, Swainson Hawks, Eastern Kingbirds, Flickers, Killdeer Plovers and, of course, the Robins.

On a recent trip to Banff I was amazed by the large numbers of Meadowlarks encountered along the road through the open prairies. Most of them sat on the road instead of the usual perch on the fence posts

NEW BIRD ACQUAINTANCESS.P. Jordan,
Saskatoon.NOTE:

(Mr. Jordan is a young man attending the University of Saskatchewan who is keenly interested in nature. He admits the fact that the country is teeming with wildlife of which he knows very little, but is most anxious to learn. His keen observation is a definite assurance that he will not be content until his curiosity has been satisfied. He has suggested that we publish a list of reference books which could be purchased by those interested in more accurate bird, animal and plant identification. We hope that our readers will suggest any books which they think would be of help to the amateur naturalist. ED.)

I saw my first Shrike on May 15, preening himself in the rain while I stood not more than 12 feet away. Since that time I have seen many of these birds and am fairly certain that I have identified both the

White-rumped and the Northern. There were at least three or four pairs nesting along a half-mile strip of country road. I found two of their nests along this road.

On May 16 I counted between 150 and 200 geese in six flocks which flew overhead at varying intervals.

Between May 20 and May 22 I saw three large flocks of what I think were Golden Plovers. I identified them as Black-bellied Plovers at first, but after reading an article on the former changed my identification. Each flock of plovers numbered at least 50 birds.

I was quite interested in a method used by a male robin to encourage his offspring to develop his powers of flight. When the young bird had, by means of a tree, reached a high telephone wire, the parent bird then commenced to dive upon and even forcibly push the young bird off the wire.

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LARK BUNTING

C. Stuart Francis,
Torch River.

On May 28, I had the great pleasure of seeing my first Lark Bunting and listening to his beautiful and very much varied song.

When I first spotted him he was sitting on a fence post about a hundred feet from me in an open field. Just as I was about to walk towards him, he took wing and flying over my head alighted in a tall Balsam Poplar. There he commenced his beautiful song. I stood and looked and listened for at least five minutes. He then flew back to the fence again. I believe that this record is probably the farthest north record for this province, as I live in Township 54, Range 15, West 2nd.

COMMON AT HAWARDEN

Harold Kvinge

Lark Buntings are very common in this district this summer and are nesting everywhere on the prairies. They haven't been around here in such numbers since 1937.

I wonder what causes them to come in such great numbers one year and then be almost absent in other years. On a trip to Alberta this summer I noticed that they became common after leaving Medicine Hat and east until we came to Maple Creek and then down to our own town of Hawarden.

I noticed a Holboell Grebe on our pond, August 4. This is the first time this bird has been recorded in this district.

We have four ducklings that are a cross between a brown tame duck and a wild mallard drake. Is this a rare occurrence? They are almost feathered now (August 12).

NOTES FROM P.L. BECKIE

Bladworth

The Black-billed Cuckoos seem to be very numerous this year. I saw and heard a great many during July. Their song is rather mysterious in its tone and quality. I have heard them sing in the darkness of night. I have often wondered if they nest here.

I found a goldfinch nest on July 24 with one egg, and another on July 25 with five eggs. I was surprised at the skillful building of the nest and its soft feathery appearance.

On July 10 I heard an unfamiliar song from a valley side at Silver Lake (a small local lake) and by careful checking have decided that it was a Brewer's Sparrow. This is described as a bird of the dry sage brush area. At any rate that was the first and only time I have heard it (I did not see it).

I was up in the Lac Vert, Naicam district on July 22 and 23 -- in W. Yanchinski's country, and was pleasantly surprised by the change in bird life from that of our locality. Some of the common ones that do not visit us are the Black-capped Chickadee, Song Sparrow, Red-tailed Hawk, Western Pewee, Ruddy Duck, Coot, Olive-sided Flycatcher and the House Wren.

Bladworth is out of the park area so the change is to be expected.

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DUCK AND GOOSE SENSE

L.T. McKim, Melfort

One of Ducks Unlimited men saw a Pin-tail with her young brood two miles from water. He gathered up the ducklings and took them to his car. The mother followed. When the car attained a speed of 45 miles an hour she fell behind but kept up with it at 40 miles per hour. When the water was reached and the young ducks released, the mother took charge of them. I think this would not happen often.

An American, living near Boston, made a pet of a Canada Goose and took it riding with him on the front seat of his car. The goose enjoyed the ride so much it was always ready to jump into the car. Once he left the goose behind and drove through Boston. He noticed that people stopped on the streets and pointed his way. Stopping the car, he found that the goose had followed him.

I believe this is a true story. A goose in Saskatchewan used to follow the children to school and then fly home.

ROBINS ARE NOT DUMB EITHER

Mrs. O.L. Wolters

A neighbor went to move his binder and noted a robin's nest with eggs in it. He moved it over a quarter of a mile, thinking it was too bad to have broken up the little home. After about a week he had occasion to come by and could hardly believe his eyes. There were the parent birds feeding young robins!

THEY DELAY TRACTOR SALE

Norm Ewaschuk, Danbury, refused \$250 for an old tractor that he had been trying to sell for some time. Reason? A family of robins had set up housekeeping in the tractor and mamma robin had hatched her eggs.

When the baby birds were big and strong enough to leave the nest Mr. Ewaschuk sold the tractor.

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PRAIRIE CHICKEN DANCING GROUNDSMarion Nixon,
Wauchope.

One thing I thought to be of interest is in respect to the prairie chicken dancing ground which I reported for the BLUE JAY before. This long knoll had been used for years.....perhaps as long as my husband has been interested. But this year they have deserted it. The trouble was that the poplar bluffs kept expanding until they encroached too closely. Two years ago they had left a sort of natural lane leading to it, and almost ringed it except for this opening. I suppose now they have started growing over the knoll itself.....and at least they have shut off the open view and approach to the site.

The other dancing ground in our cultivated field about 300 yards west of the house is used increasingly, though not as many congregate there as did on 15. However, I also hear them east of the house from rising ground in the sheep pasture. They may use the crest of the gentle rise, or just beyond it. I have not had time to investigate.

THE BROWN THRASHER

Arthur Ward

Even with so much food around, the Brown Thrasher has a special craving for crushed wheat and is easily taken for banding.

Usually shy, it is a very desirable bird to have around, both in song and usefulness. One pair nested in a gooseberry bush and the four young had reached the half fledged state when, for some reason, the female died.

After this event careful observation showed the male vigorously protecting and feeding the young, both before and after leaving the nest.

One female Brown Thrasher, after having been banded, returned here three years in succession. No other bird except a barn swallow has been known to do that at this station. There have, however, been one-year returns.

A robin banded June 6, 1949, was retaken on May 15, 1950. A Catbird banded June 14, 1949, was retaken August 9, 1950. One robin banded July 26, 1947 was rebanded in Oklahoma, Feb. 1, 1947. Another robin banded August 7, 1944, was killed by a cat at Kerrobert, July 24, 1946. A Brown Thrasher banded July 27, 1943, was killed during a hail storm at Lucky Lake June 3, 1944.

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BIRD BATH CONSTRUCTIONW. Yanchinski,
Naicam.

I would like to pass on an idea of an easily made, inexpensive bird bath. I constructed one last spring and it appears to be just the thing to attract birds. It requires only a few cents' worth of cement and an old discarded washtub.

The space in the lower half of the tub, which is not required, may be filled with old cans or scraps of wood. The concrete is poured into the tub, then hollowed out with a trowel to form a basin-like depression, the deepest part in the centre being not more than three inches deep.

It may easily be water-proofed by a heavy application of asphalt and then another layer of cement. A water-pail equipped with a faucet and hung on the bath would not only keep it replenished but the dripping water would draw the attention of the birds to the bath. It may be painted to match the grounds scenery.

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PURPLE MARTINS

L.T. McKim

I have four boxes for Purple Martins which I can look into from the top of my house. This week (July 10) I took a peep. One contained seven young, one five, one two and the other had one egg. I have found in other years that the number of eggs varies greatly. I wonder if they lay in each others nests!

STUBBORN AND OBLIGING WARBLERS

Arthur Ward

On visiting a friend in Ashley Park, Swift Current, he proudly announced that there was a "Wild Canary" nest in the garden containing three eggs, and that the birds were in the habit of covering the eggs up during the day and sitting on them during the night. I remarked that this was something unusual for the Yellow Warbler. Well! He would show me. On looking into the nest I noted that it was empty. "Poke down," he said. I did so and discovered the egg of a Cowbird. Further poking revealed another; then under another layer was found the third Cowbird egg.

It was evident there was going to be no hatching there. The warbler had declined to do the baby sitting.

Although having seen three pairs of Cowbirds in my grove, I found no evidence of their parasitic schemes. I was, however, surprised to see a young Cowbird, fully fledged and well able to take care of itself, seemingly picking insects on a spruce branch, when a yellow warbler flew to it with food. At the same time another young Cowbird came within six feet of them and the three flew away together.

The warbler, though having been known to build three nests, one above the other, rather than hatch out a Cowbird, evidently, in this case, has willingly obliged the Cowbird.

Of all the warblers, the Yellow Warbler is the most useful to those living on the prairie. It is the only warbler we see at this point between migration periods. It is surprising how large a mouthful, for a small bird, the young can take soon after being hatched.

Truly this is one of the most valuable of our feathered friends.

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ANOTHER YORKTON NATURE ENTHUSIAST

D. Vivian Everard

I have been a member of the British Empire Naturalists Association for a number of years, and having been out here two years now I'm really getting down to the study of wild life in Saskatchewan.

Ornithology is the particular line I work on apart from every other phase of wild life. I observed in the BLUE JAY that Mr. Ralph Stueck of Abernethy is one of your directors. We contact each other quite frequently on matters of Natural History.

I do quite a bit of Photography and am publishing the pictures from time to time in the Yorkton Enterprise and other papers. Having a Kodak Medalist 11 with complete line of accessories I am well equipped.

I rather imagine to get photographs published in the BLUE JAY would incur too much expense on behalf of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society. But providing the photographs were excellent I imagine the BLUE JAY would have a greater circulation. Just an idea I had!! That's all!! Let me know what you think!!

NOTE:

(We are looking forward to the day when the Society can afford to have the BLUE JAY printed commercially and photographs reproduced in it. As you say, this would result in greater circulation. Such a procedure will not be possible until we can boast of a thousand or more members. At the present time our membership is about 500 and it takes over a hundred dollars to produce and deliver each issue.

In the meantime we will depend upon the enthusiasm of our present subscribers to get at least one new member each. Editor)

SCARLET TANAGERS

Stuart Houston

On Sunday, May 21, a beautiful male Scarlet Tanager was noted at the York Lake golf course, four miles south-west of Yorkton by Miss Nancy Morrison. It was also observed on the same day by Henry Beck and on the following day by myself and Henry Belcher.

It was very tame and allowed observers to approach to within ten feet of it. This is the first definite record of this species in the Yorkton district.

I noticed in "Chickadee Notes" in the Winnipeg Free Press, that there have been more reports than usual of the Scarlet Tanagers in Manitoba this year.

DUCKS PLENTIFUL AT FOAM LAKE

Mr. George Cruickshank, of Foam Lake, reports that he has never previously seen as many ducks in his district as there are this year. Although unable to identify the species, he said most of the ducks were of small size and in the spring practically all nests had twelve eggs.

Mr. Cruickshank also reported there were fewer crows, more than the average number of coyotes and a heavy increase in the magpie population.

FRIENDLY CHICKADEES

Marion Nixon,
Wauchope.

Last winter I persevered until I taught two chickadees that it was safe to feed from my hand or my hat. There were several who came for suet and nutmeats, but only these two became tame. They stay together, and are so different in build I am sure they were a pair. Toward spring they became much more nervous of feeding from my hand though the little slim one always did so eventually. They left the shelterbelt twice for a period of time, but the inclement weather would drive them back I suppose. The last time they came, demanding food in no uncertain terms, was April 29th. Chickadees may be heard still, well out in the pasture, so I am hoping that "Sweetheart and Cocky" bring me a brood of young ones to feed bye and bye.

ALBINO ROBIN

Mrs. W. Buceuk,
Kamsack.

This spring, May 16, 17 and 18, we had an unusual visitor. It was an albino robin, the only one I've ever seen. It was pure white, with perhaps the faintest suggestion of pink on its breast. The fact that it sang heartily suggested that it was a male bird.

Several years ago, in the fall, I saw a Barn Swallow that appeared to be a partial albino. The other swallows in the flock chased it away whenever it came near. The robins, however, treated the white robin just as they did the others. There was a female robin present which I believe was its mate.

ROCK WRENS NEAR REGINA

Mr. Cliff Shaw, of Yorkton, informs us that Mr. Thos. M. Beveridge, Rural Route No. 1, Regina, is a keen naturalist and knows his birds so well that he can qualify with the best ornithologists in the province.

We were therefore pleased to receive from Mr. Beveridge the following observations:

Bird migration has not been as spectacular as last year, but quite interesting none the less. Probably the late spring would account for the comparative fewness of water birds observed, though representatives of most species seen last year have been among them, and the persistent winds probably accounted for my not seeing many migrating warblers out here far from effective shelter. Actually I have not yet had a look around the Qu'Appelle Valley this spring, so have missed seeing some of the common resident birds. So what I have not seen may not be particularly significant. However I wonder if the Say Phoebe did arrive and starved for lack of insects. I have not seen one of them yet.

Most interesting of my observations this spring has been the appearance within several hundred yards of the Manse of a Rock Wren, a bird I had not expected to find this far north in the Province. There was one around for about four days and I had several good views of it, so am absolutely certain of the identification.

ROCK WREN'S NEST

On July 5, Mrs. Croome, of Regina, was fortunate enough to find a Rock Wren's nest in the Qu'Appelle Valley, near Highway No. 6, North of the city. With her was Mrs. James Crawford, of Regina, who made the identification.

AN UNUSUAL SITE

On June 17, Ronald Coleman, of Yorkton, reported finding a robin's nest built on the ground at the base of a poplar tree, "about the size of a stovepipe." The nest was in the centre of a bluff, edging the muskeg, on the west outskirts of the town. Ronald is one of the active members of the Simpson School Nature Club.

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BIRD LIFE AT SHEHO

Wm. Niven

Our winter was very long and very cold - the coldest in history. Naturally this affected bird and animal life. However, most of the resident winter birds came through in good shape. The spring was very late and cold, the snow staying nearly all April and there were still drifts in May.

The bird migration was later than usual all through, some of them arriving two or three weeks after usual dates. The only birds to arrive here in March were the Horned Lark (March 3) and the Crow (March 29).

I might mention here that I observed the northern race of Horned Larks, which I reported last year, on May 8. The flocks were smaller in numbers than last season and only stayed about two weeks.

I had one unusual record this spring. Three large Snowy Owls paid us a visit on April 16, probably on their way north. This is a very late date for their appearance here. Only one was noted in southern migration (Dec. 11). They must have gone a long way south last winter; according to reports I have read, some went as far as the southern states.

The nesting season is now (June 22) well advanced, though later than other years.

There is one thing I must mention here and that is the great amount of grouse and duck nests taken by crows and magpies. These marauders are far too plentiful and they keep up a continual hunt for eggs. I have found many empty egg-shells and nests. At this time there should be many broods of ducks on the sloughs, but I haven't seen any so far. It seems most of the early nests are taken before the leaves come on the trees. This was very late this season so most of the ducks would have to nest again when there was better cover.

I think our commonest nesting bird here is the Vesper Sparrow. Many nests have been found and some destroyed while working the summer-fallow. Fortunately, they soon start another nest again.

One Arkansas Kingbird was observed here, June 6. They have been seen here before, but only stayed a few days and never nested, to my knowledge.

A Bobolink was noted, June 13, flying over but going south. I guess it had been further north scouting the country. They are rarely seen here now. Many years ago they were common and nested in the hay flats. None were seen last year, but in 1948, four were observed on June 12. This was the first time since 1942.

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1950 SPRING MIGRATION RECORDS

In order to have a comparative list of bird migrants this year, we published in our last issue the one compiled by P. Laurence Beckie, of Bladworth.

The remaining dates of his spring migration records appear below. The complete list should be of value to many others who have similar ones. Next year, as well as this, they will prove of value for comparative purposes. There are 96 birds in the complete list.

1950 SPRING MIGRATION RECORDS

P. Laurence Beckie

May 12	Tree Swallow	May 18	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
	Clay-coloured Sparrow		Baltimore Oriole
	White-crowned Sparrow		Brown Thrasher
	Red-headed Duck	May 20	Cliff Swallow
	Canvasback Duck		Sora Rail
	Baldpate Duck	May 21	Mourning Dove
	American Pipit	May 23	Black Tern
	Upland Plover		Purple Martin (not certain)
May 13	Barn Swallow	May 26	Common Tern
	Cowbird	May 27	Lark Bunting
	Ring-billed Gulls		Western Pewee
May 14	Yellow Warbler	May 28	Arkansas Kingbird
	Hermit Thrush	May 29	American Goldfinch
May 15	Northern Water Thrush	May 30	Burrowing Owl Nest (a hasty, uncertain observation)
	Chipping Sparrow	May 31	Northern Phalarope
	Black-poll Warbler	June 5	Connecticut Warbler (The above ident. was quite certain. I saw the mantel, the eye ring, although it was my first record of it).
	Olive-backed Thrush		
	Short-eared Owl	June 2	Veery or Wilson Thrush
	Leontes or Sharp-tailed Sparrow		
May 16	Bairds Sandpiper		
	Bank Swallows		
	Spotted Towhee		
	Harris Sparrow		
	Golden Plover		
	Eastern Kingbird		
May 17	Least Flycatcher		
May 18	Nighthawk		
	Say's Phoebe		
	June 5		Catbird
	June 6		Black-crowned Night Heron
	June 11		Cedar Waxwing
	June 17		American Bittern
	July 2		Black-billed Cuckoo

BIRD BANDING AT BURNHAM

Mr. Arthur Ward has had a very busy summer again at his banding station. In the shade of an artificial bluff, it is so close to his home that he can see some of the traps from his study window.

Twenty species and a total of 132 birds have been banded.

2	Myrtle Warbler	2	Catbird
42	Junco	3	Redwing Blackbird
2	Song Sparrow	1	Red Crossbill
2	Tree Sparrow	1	Baltimore Oriole
12	Olive-backed Thrush	6	Brown Thrasher
23	Gambel's Sparrow	11	Robin
1	White Crown Sparrow	5	Lincoln Sparrow
1	Chestnut-coloured Longspur	10	Yellow Warbler
3	Say's Phoebe	2	House Wren
1	Eastern Towhee	2	Chipping Sparrow

BLUEBIRDS

R. D. Burroughs

(Reprinted by permission of Conservation Volunteer).

Can you recall when first you saw a bluebird -- when last you saw one? The chances are that you cannot. But if you are a country man at heart, the flash of azure wings along a country road will thrill you as it did when you first saw this blithesome bird of woods and fields. One does not tire of seeing bluebirds.

In earlier years, when man was less efficient in the management of land, the bluebird was more common than it is today. It faced no housing shortage then for hedgerows bounded nearly every field; orchards grew on almost every farm, and many woodlots still remained untouched by saw or axe. Decaying snags or broken limbs and hollow trunks of lifeless trees provided cavities for bluebird nests.

Today the situation is reversed. The ancient monarchs of the woods are gone; diseased defective trees are soon removed; "wolf" trees are cut to open up the forest canopy and give the younger healthy trees the space they need for growth. In many areas steel has now replaced the cedar post, and fence rows generally are cleared of trees and brush. The use of 2-4-D and DDT gives promise of reducing weeds and insect life. All this is good considering human needs, but song birds find these changes in their habitat unfavorable.

A scarcity of natural nesting sites is known to limit the abundance of birds which lay their eggs in cavities in rotting wood. In addition to the bluebird, a partial list of them might well include the woodpecker, the nuthatch, the chickadee, the house wren, and the crested fly catcher. All these are birds of economic worth. They hold destructive insect life in check; they are important factors in maintaining Nature's balance among the varied forms of living things; their needs must not be overlooked in managing the land.

The forester, who understands the intricate relationships of all the varied forms of life, both plant and animal, will take account of the requirements of game and other animals when making plans for management of woods and open areas. The farmer or the country man, who dwells by choice upon the land, will find reward in managing his fields and timber lands in such a way that food and cover are assured for wildlife.

The bluebird will respond quite readily to any improvements in his habitat. A farmer, who erected several score of bluebird houses in the woods and orchards and along the fence-rows where bluebirds had been rarely seen, found that more than half of them were shortly occupied.

'Tis fortunate that man has learned that he can ill afford to overlook the needs of common birds as well as those which satisfy his yen for sport.

God grant that we may never see the time when bluebirds are a curiosity!

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ARE YOU AN ARTIST?

We will be glad to reproduce small and simple drawings, to illustrate your story, such as those that have appeared in the BLUE JAY.

CONSERVATION PLEDGEMrs. O.L. Wolters,
Tolland, Alta.

In the last issue of the BLUE JAY I mentioned the American Conservation Pledge and our adopting it. Perhaps you have already noticed in the July issue of "Outdoor Life" that Canadians have a similar pledge in both English and French with maple leaves and a beaver instead of stars and an eagle. Now I hope they make badges and seals, etc., for our coat lapels and stationery. Perhaps they have done so already. I want some as soon as I find out.

CONSERVATION PLEDGE

W.A. Brownlee, Regina.

The little article on a conservation pledge (Mrs. Wolters) in the last issue of the BLUE JAY brings to mind that we have such a pledge in Saskatchewan, but so far few people know about it.

This pledge has been printed on the back of special muskrat licenses since 1947. The particular work I have been looking after in the Department of Natural Resources is the supervision of the trapping program in southern Saskatchewan. It is my hope that these pledges will be printed and distributed to all schools. The pledge is as follows:

I pledge myself as a citizen of Saskatchewan
to protect and conserve the Natural Resources
of my Province -- its soil and minerals, its
forests, waters, and wildlife.

WE ARE BECOMING CONSERVATION MINDED

C. Stuart Francis

At last I really believe that Saskatchewan folk are becoming conservation minded. Wherever one goes he is beginning to meet people who are seriously realizing the value of conserving our forests, our waters, soils and wildlife. I believe that the awakening is due mostly to the perseverance of our public-spirited men who have, over the radio and through the newspapers, tried very hard to show the necessity of preventing the colossal waste that has been going on all over our great western country. They have endeavored to show people the pleasure and satisfaction to be enjoyed in having a Saskatchewan that is beautiful, prosperous and healthy in natural resources.

My hope is that the newspapers, radio stations, forestry officials, game officials, Fish and Game Leagues and private individuals will keep up the good work. We have only just begun to awaken to the richness and wealth of our country and of the short time left to undo the damage done by carelessness and exploitation in the past.

THE TRAIL OF EXTERMINATION - Wildlife Division, Dept.
of Resources, Winnipeg.

Until very recently the persistent idea that we have unlimited trees, animals and birds was so firmly fixed in the minds of Canadians that the man who suggested caution was looked upon as abnormal. Now more and more people have become aware that wildlife is an important part of our total resources, and that it cannot be treated as a separate item. Wildlife Management has thus begun to assume its rightful place as an integral part of land use. With the technically-trained staffs that are now employed by the Dominion and various provinces we are learning how these resources must

be handled, and we are applying the necessary controls for their preservation. Let us all be ever on the watch, lest some of the remainder of the wild animals and birds follow the trail of extermination, which the buffalo so narrowly escaped.

WANTON KILLING

K. M. Buceuk, Kamsack.

The Sunday after the local Fish and Game League had a write-up in our paper regarding crows, etc., a group of young boys spent much of the afternoon on the road allowance within half a mile of our house. We presumed that they were trying to shoot crows, but later, when I had occasion to go that way, I saw what had occupied their time. After much effort they had succeeded in killing a Flying Squirrel, of whose existence I had not even been aware.

It seems that more time might be profitably spent in educating people which animals should be conserved rather than emphasizing destruction.

CONSERVATION DEPENDS ON ONE'S POINT OF VIEW Arthur Ward

True conservation has many adherents in the province as we have observed from comments which have appeared in past issues of the BLUE JAY. Of this we must justly be proud.

I believe that acts of various predators must be condoned to that extent to which nature has devised. Man, considered by many as number one predator, considers that he has justifiable reasons in protecting ducks and other game birds from all other sources of destruction, in order that he, in turn may dispose of them. It would seem that some species that prey on other birds are immune from attacks by others. There are so many angles following along the lines of conservation, that one can hardly refrain from trespassing beyond the bounds of the cause and condoning the results we see in others.

Seated in a garden in California, I saw a Cooper's Hawk carrying a small bird in its talons, settle on a dove cote. It regarded me with baneful eyes, as I moved nearer to get a better view of the victim, who soon flew away, carrying the bird. This was repeated on another occasion. And still once again in the same garden, one of these hawks swooped towards a bush where all the small birds had scurried, causing their hurried exit. The hawk, following, seized one of the birds on the wing within twelve feet from the bush and took off with it.

On reporting this incident to the members of the Whittier Audubon Society, the only remark of the ardent conservationists was, "Yes, they do eat small birds."

CONSERVATION IS A STATE
OF MIND

- Conservation Volunteer

Today is an era of challenge, a challenge to sportsmen to unite behind a unified program of conservation, a challenge to recognize that conservation is much more than hunting and fishing, a challenge to support a program of conservation education as the basis of a long-range conservation program, and a challenge to realize that conservation is fundamental to the economic prosperity of our state and nation.

In the years gone by we have talked a great deal about conservation education. We have been impatient of results. We realize that the teaching of conservation is not achieved by legislation alone; that conservation is a state of mind; that it is an attitude.

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MUSEUM REGISTERS VITALITY

By William Rowan

(Mr. Rowan is professor of zoology and head of that department at the University of Alberta).

A few days ago I stopped over in Regina and for the first time had the pleasure of visting your provincial museum.

Having spent many professional hours in some of the famous museums of this continent and Europe, may I take the liberty of complimenting you on yours. It seems to be the fate of most local museums to start life in a basement and it was no shock to find yours in one, but I marvelled at the maturity yours had reached without bursting its walls and coming up into the open. Every cubby-hole and corridor appeared to be in use for the display of something: it seemed to me that the museum had already qualified for some fresh air and promotion!

I liked your museum on several counts. A modern museum should achieve various objectives: to provide entertainment for visitors of all kinds is perhaps the first. It does this in a manner difficult to analyse but attendance is the final arbiter as to whether a museum is dead or alive. The registered attendance at yours strikes me as remarkable, especially in view of its subterranean premises, for a city the size of Regina. It has definitely demonstrated its vitality.

Another function of a museum is to fire the imagination and inspire an interest in its exhibits, an invitation to visitors to obey the ancient behest--"Go thou and do likewise." In this way museums have been constant incentives for the development of hobbies. In our present age, when it seems to be expected of our youth that it should squander its spare hours on the fictitious glories of Hollywood, or lapping up the imported gangsterism (and today, propaganda) of the funnies, or listening by the hour to the swing, jazz and crooning (also imported rubbish) which flows incessantly from our radios, or reading the lowest forms of cheap escape literature (also mostly imported), a museum seems to belong to another world, a clean world of the great open spaces which are still our heritage.

The museum invites us to spend our time in personal effort, mental and physical, to cultivate our intellects under our own steam. It is not only great naturalists who have been born of museums, but geniuses in other fields have in the museum atmosphere discovered themselves too. From the simple inspiration of plants and animals, dinosaurs or Indians or geological formations, they have finally become critical students of the world they live in, prompted in the first place by the simple revelations of an effectively organized museum.

In Canada, where we can still hunt at a nominal cost, and there is yet something left to hunt, a museum, with its graphic displays of game animals and birds, can instil the basic principles of conservation more readily and soundly than many hours of lecturing. It can convert mere hunters into true sportsmen. There is also the art of photography which for many

replaces the lure of the gun. And the jumping off point is often against the museum. In this connection, the film library now so successfully started in your institution will doubtless prove a potent stimulus for this hobby also. I saw some of these films: they were excellent.

General education, that over-worked word, is perhaps the final and greatest function of a museum. In this respect, the general plan of yours is as sound as anything I have encountered. Accurate information, interestingly conveyed, is doubtless the essence of a museum: yours has it.

A museum is only half a museum if it fails to cater also to the beautiful, the aesthetic. The paintings embellishing the walls and cases, part and parcel of modern showmanship, surpass many that I can recall in some of the world's more celebrated museums. They are an inspiration in themselves. They add that final touch that gives a museum its "soul."

A museum cannot create a good director: it is the director, and his staff, that create the museum. In Mr. Fred Bard and his associates you have the dynamo which is putting yours on the map. If I may make a suggestion--I hope it won't be considered an impertinence--it is that you give them fresh air to breathe and the space to fulfill the promise they have shown to provide Saskatchewan with a notable and invaluable provincial institution.

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BEAVERS AT WAUCHOPE

Marion Nixon

There has been a marked increase in beaver population throughout this district during the past three years. The main lodge we know of is situated about 3 1/2 miles northeast of our house, and is well posted. It is now quite a local tourist attraction, as the lodge is so large in comparison with the ubiquitous muskrat house; and the amount of wood being cut and hauled is amazing. I have been to look at it once, in early evening, and our presence was repeatedly reported by the scout, smacking his tail on the water several times. Then he would dive, come up a few yards farther away, swim around for a few moments, smack out his beaver morse code again, and submerge.

Their site is on the north side of a long slough with fairly steep sloping banks. My husband says that all through the dry years it was a hay meadow, and was cut out year after year, right to the middle. It was then like a long "draw." But now that it has been filled with our past rainy seasons, and dammed by the beaver, horses have been seen to swim, crossing it.

The neighbor who lives nearest to it has counted 15 beaver adults and yearlings. This is the same number I was told were there last year also. Perhaps they consider this the capacity of that site, for now there are several new lodges being started within two or three miles of the big one. One of these is within 3/4 mile of our house, and they have dammed a runway between two sloughs, backing up the run-off so that water covers the road in one place where a high narrow grade separates the two sections of a deep slough. My husband noticed the beginning of a lodge east of this last fall, but no one saw any activity all winter, nor any footprints while the snow was here. There is another started on the Antler creek just south of Parkman; and my son's school pupils are enjoying watching the construction of another, now, in their pasture. The trimmings from the felled trees had been laid

carefully in a circle, stems pointing to the interior of the house-to-be, and they had started the first layer of plastering.

In another place by the original lodge, they have dammed (plugged) a culvert in a grade, and repeat this as often as the farmer unplugs it, and now have dug a ditch 3 ft. deep (so I am told) between the slough and another, and have carried that mud to the big house. No wonder the beaver's engineering acumen and its indefatigable industry is legend! I have written Mr. Paynter about them, as this road submersion becomes a problem.

In 1924 there was a beaver lodge on the Pond on the Antler creek, but there was not so much bluff in those years, and they soon exhausted supplies and moved on. Once since we have known of a lodge in much the same reach of the creek, but it was later abandoned also.

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DEER

K. M. Buceuk

I would like to report on the deer population around Kamsack. Last fall hunters were out in full force. Some of them had an aeroplane to "spot" the deer for them. I do not know whether this is against the law or not.

Towards spring our forest ranger noticed many deer starving at Madge Lake Provincial Park and began to enquire where the deer were located. He was very pleased to find that some had wintered on our farm. They were the only ones he had heard about. However, there must have been more because this spring we had four herds of them -- up to twenty-five -- feeding on the stubble every evening. It seems to me that poachers take a heavy toll of deer during the late winter.

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A COYOTE IN THE YARD

Mrs. John Hubbard,
Grenfell.

We had a visit from a coyote on August 13. My husband looked out of the window about 6 o'clock and saw one between the house and the barn eyeing my hens, which had not been shut up. He circled around and didn't take a hen though they were within reach and much excited. He never worried about three cows in the yard and they eyed him but didn't get excited. By the time my husband got out with the rifle the coyote had decided to leave and although he was followed down the lane on the tractor he didn't appear again.

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A VISIT FROM A WEASEL

Mrs. O.L. Wolters,
Tolland, Alberta.

During the later part of June I heard quite a commotion among the bird population in some bush near our house and hurried over expecting to see our old cat, but looking down at me and crouching very still along an inclined tree trunk was a weasel. He stayed there for a long time, just moving his head occasionally to look at some newcomer to his onlookers. Beside myself, his spectators were bluebirds, robins, orioles and a flicker.

COYOTE CAPERS

S.P. Jordon

The following eye witness account of coyote behaviour was told to me by a member of the United States federal department of agriculture:

"I once watched a pair of coyotes capture a gopher by a rather unique method. The coyotes lined up in single file and approached a gopher so that the wind blew their scent away from the gopher. As far as the gopher was concerned there was only one coyote approaching his hole. When the first coyote passed over the hole the gopher reappeared, his safety being assured by the faintness of the scent of the first coyote which had continued on, walking up-wind. The second coyote, having dropped to a crouch position immediately behind the first coyote when it passed over the hole, was able, with one quick lunge, to grasp the unsuspecting gopher."

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FIELD-MOUSE NEST

S.P. Jordon

On May 18 I discovered the nest of a field-mouse. It was composed entirely of chicken feathers and yet there wasn't a farm or a chicken for nearly a mile. What boundless energy must have gone into the construction of this warm and cosy abode!

WHITE-FOOTED MICE

W. Yanchinski

Have the members noticed the scarcity of the White-footed mice this year? I haven't noted a single individual, while working in the fields, although I did encounter several Jumping Mice.

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B O T A N YHIS ARTICIE WILL BE MISSED

In this issue readers will greatly miss the usual article on a plant family written by Mr. Arch C. Budd.

We are sorry to report that Mr. Budd has not been well this summer. He took radium treatments in the clinic at Regina early in June and since then has been having a great deal of trouble with his right eye which had become affected.

On July 21 he wrote that he and his wife were leaving by train for Nova Scotia to attend his son's wedding. They did not expect to be back until mid-August. He expressed his regret at not being able to send his usual contribution but hoped to be able to prepare one for our next issue.

The BLUE JAY hopes that Mr. Budd has had a restful holiday and wish for him a speedy return to good health.

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To turn a world of beauty into a world of ugliness is
a great crime.

...Howard Braucher.

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INTERESTED IN BOTANY SECTION

Wm. Niven

I am very interested in the Botany Section and read with interest the descriptions of the different plant families that appear in the BLUE JAY.

I am familiar with the names of most of the common wild flowers, but would like to know them all. I have already learned some of them from the descriptions given by Arch C. Budd.

I am glad to learn that he is publishing a book of the plants and flowers of the West. It should prove a very welcome aid in identifying the different kinds. Two of my favorites are the violets and the wild peas and vetches. There has already appeared a description of the different violets in an issue of the BLUE JAY. The kinds of violets I have found growing around here are the following; the commonest is the Early Blue Violet. The Crowfoot Violet is found in some grassy meadows. The Canada Violet is fairly common in moist well-shaded bluffs. Also I have found one which I think is the Marsh Violet, growing in wet places. The flower is blue, but the leaves are heart-shaped, sometimes reddish on the underside.

(This is the Northern Bog Violet, *Viola nephrophylla*..Editor).

I would like to see an article on the wild peas and vetches as I would like to know the proper names for them. I am familiar with the Golden Bean, a very common flower, but we have several wild peas or vetches, as well as some wild clovers and loco weeds, the names of which I am not yet familiar.

MARSH VIOLET

We were pleased to receive from Mrs. W. Buceuk, of Kamsack, a living specimen of a violet for identification. It was a Marsh Violet (*Viola palustris*) and was found in a damp spot, growing in the shade of trees.

This plant was set out in a flower pot and thrived all summer under the shade of a spruce tree in the garden. We hope to get a plant in full bloom next spring to add to our collection.

CACTI

Never within the memory of local naturalists was there such a profusion of Cacti as appeared on the dry hills of the Qu'Appelle Valley this spring. Some hillsides were yellow with the waxy blossoms of the Prickly Pear Cactus. Others were almost a solid mass of red -- a galaxy of fiery stars protruding from the pine-apple-like green clusters of the Ball Cactus.

Among the yellow blossoms, Mrs. H. A. Croome, of Regina, came upon a Prickly Pear blossom, distinctly pink in color.

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Animals that fight with their teeth retract their ears when angry so that the ears cannot be injured or torn by the enemy.

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THE PRAIRIE LILY

Of interest, perhaps to our new members, is the fact that the Prairie Lily is the floral emblem of Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Natural Society should form the nucleus of a group, continually advocating that this beautiful flower be conserved.

Mrs. E. B. Flock, of the Regina Natural History Society first suggested that that society urge the government to declare the lily to be Saskatchewan's floral emblem. In 1941 the Legislature passed an Act making "the flower known botanically as '*Lilium philadelphicum andinum*' and popularly called 'the Prairie Lily'....." the emblem of the Province.

Dorothy Morrison, of Regina, has written a very interesting booklet on this flower, dedicated to the children of Saskatchewan. Copies may be obtained from the School Aids and Text Book Publishing Company, Regina.

In some areas of Saskatchewan, this summer, the lilies appeared in abundance. In other areas there were very few. In the few places they grow around Regina they appeared in profusion but their beauty was soon marred as their petals were destroyed by grasshoppers almost as fast as they appeared. Mrs. Hubbard writes that there were very few at Grenfell, but Mr. Yanchinski reports that they were abundant and lovely at Naicam.

Mrs. S. O. Olson, of Big River, has this to say: "This beautiful flower appears to be on the increase around our home. No one is permitted to pull them and when one has control of a section, a few years soon show

Of particular interest is the following item from C.S. Francis, of Torch River:

Several years ago I found a delicate yellow Prairie Lily, which has since bloomed every year in my garden. About the middle of June, my son, Stanley, a keen naturalist, like his dad, found an even more unusual and lovely wild lily. It was at least two feet tall, with two very large blooms, of unusual beauty. The petals were of a bright red on the outer edge, gradually turning to an orange or a highly strong yellow, while the spots in the throat, which are usually almost black, were of a beautiful clear lilac color. It was strikingly different from the others that were blooming all around it. Needless to say we have this rare find in our garden alongside the yellow lily.

FLOWERS AT GRENFELL

Mrs. John Hubbard

We've had lots of rain (as well as three hailstorms) in June, and the crops are heavy, though late and badly lodged. Wild flowers are not late in spite of the backward season and are very profuse. Lilies were noticeable by their absence this year. My husband brought in a lady slipper from some breaking; the first we've seen in years. They are going with the bush. Saskatoons and wild raspberries have been plentiful this year. Berry pickers were just as thick as the mosquitoes and just as courteous.

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It has been estimated that more than one-half of the world's flowers, would vanish if there were no bees.

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THE GREAT SAND HILLS

A.J. Breitung

There are more or less extensive areas of shifting sand hills in the prairie region of south-western Saskatchewan. The largest of these is known as the Great Sand Hills with an extent of more than 500 square miles. This area is situated approximately 30 to 45 miles east of the Saskatchewan-Alberta border and 100 to 130 miles north of the International Boundary.

The areas of drifting sand are due to the action of prevalent north-westerly winds on an originally sandy and hilly region. Whenever the sod or protecting covering of matted roots is broken or removed, the dry, light sand underneath, coming under the influence of the eddy currents of air, is carried away and piled up in oval or rounded banks. Across these banks clouds of sand are constantly driving. This process continues until the main substance of the hill is gone and nothing but its mere skeleton remains. The floor, after the hill has been removed, is generally covered with pebbles and other heavier matter which was sifted out.

The sand hills appear to be moving slowly toward the east or south-east following the direction of the prevailing winds. The progress is clearly shown on the east side where the hills are now underlaid with a loamy or clay floor and on the western side where solitary sand hills are occasionally found far in the rear of the advancing mass.

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INSECTS AND FROST

J.D. Ritchie

When it is fifty below the snow creaks underfoot; the frosty wind pierces the clothing, whitens one's nose and ears and nips the toes and fingers. The trees in the woods crack with a report like that of a rifle -- then in its little nest on the bare twig of a willow there hangs the tiny caterpillar of the Banded Purple. When men and animals freeze and die this hibernating insect larva, secure in its hibernaculum, is able to retain its spark of life and in the spring, after feeding and pupating, will emerge into what is probably our most beautiful butterfly. It flits here and there, dances in the sunshine and delights the eye of the naturalist.

Nothing in the whole realm of nature is more marvellous than the manner in which some of the minutest forms of animal life are able to resist extremely cold temperatures. Away up in the arctic regions where the mercury goes as low of 75 and even 80 degrees below zero the butterfly caterpillars of the genera *Erebia* *Oeneis* and many species *Brenthis* awaken, feed and develop when vegetation starts to grow again in the spring.

One entomological writer is doubtful that insect larvae can freeze in the winter, thaw in the spring and regain their vitality. He says, "This view has never been positively proven."

I wish that writer had been with me last winter when I was splitting wood. I am certain that he would have changed his mind. There in the centre of a poplar block was a little larva, a cerambycid grub concealed in its woody winter bed. I took it in my fingers and broke it in two. It snapped like a piece of sealing wax of the same size. Frozen? Certainly! Wouldn't this race of beetles become extinct if they did not rejuvenate? But they still continue to destroy untold numbers of our valuable forest trees.

Two years ago I came across a cossid moth caterpillar in the same way. It was solidly frozen. I tightly tied the split stick together again with twine, being careful not to injure the occupant and stored it in a shoe-box in the cold tool-house. When spring arrived I took it into the cabin and after it matured and hatched I had a perfect adult female specimen of the destructive tree pest, *Acoasus populi*. Ants in a state of suspended animation in their woody galleries were found in the same way. When squeezed between the thumb and fingers of my glove their stiffly frozen bodies became a blackish brown powder.

Oh yes! Mr. Entomologist. Insect larvae freeze and regain their vitality. At least some of them do. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

THE LARDER BEETLE AND THE ARMY CUTWORM MOTH A Ward

I submitted two species of insects, this summer, to the Dominion Laboratory at Indian Head, for identification. Miss Margaret Cumming, of that department, identified one as a larva of the Larder Beetle and the other as the Army Cutworm moth.

The Larder Beetle, a household pest often seen on stored ham and bacon in basements and other storage areas, is from one-quarter to three-eighths of an inch in length. The color is blackish, and the insect has a wide pale yellow head. The grubs, which were found in a bee-hive, are brown and hairy with two stout spines on the back near the end of the body.

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The moths, which have been so numerous this summer, with the fore-wings dark in color and the hind wings a lighter shade, and with a wing expanse of about two inches, are those of the Army Cutworm. What this portends in the matter of next year's increase of these insects remains to be seen.

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FORESTRY

A. Ward

The article on forestry by C. Stuart Francis, in the first issue of this year's BLUE JAY is to be highly commended. Mr. Francis refers to the grasshopper infestation as something that could possibly be prevented from reaching the proportions that have been so evident this summer.

If forestry were undertaken more seriously and extended to the prairies, means would be provided for encouraging many insect-eating birds to stay where they are not at present.

The matter has been discussed and presented to the Department of Natural Resources, Regina. The presentation to the Department was the suggestion that eighty acres of land be set aside in every municipality for the planting of trees. It was suggested that the trees should be planted twenty feet between rows, so that they could be easily worked with a tractor.

Travelling west last November, after a very dry period, parts of the prairie district presented a most miserable sight. The grass, nibbled as bare as the road, had the appearance of a desert area. The proximity to the adjacent wooded Cypress Hills does not seem to influence the surrounding semi-arid district.

A forestry station in that area might be the means of inducing more moisture and attracting many species of birds which do not stay there at the present time.

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ANNUAL MEETING

Plan to attend this meeting, to be held in the Museum auditorium, Regina, Friday, October 27. See page 4.

